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## Providing Effective Employment Education in Vocational High Schools

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Announcing plans on the development of vocational high schools in February 2000, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOE) presented a new overall direction for vocational high school education of Korea. As a follow-up, Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training(KRIVET) has been conducting researches in several areas to develop specific policies.

Although employment education has been one of the key areas of vocational high school education for decades, it is getting less attention recently due to several reasons. Since the financial bailout program of IMF in 1997, deteriorating economic conditions have made it difficult for the graduates of vocational high schools to find a job, and revised college admission system for 2002 has reduced the number of graduates of vocational high schools seeking jobs upon finishing school.

Nevertheless, as there are still many students who can not afford to enter a college due to economic reasons or who want to get a job instead of entering a college, employment education is still an important area for vocational high schools.

This study intends to assess current conditions and identify issues regarding employment education of existing vocational high schools. It also seeks to develop improvement measures by conducting surveys on related people to analyze the needs.

Based on a literature research, the study has interviewed officers of MOE, officers of municipal and provincial education offices, members of professional council of vocational high school teachers, and students of vocational high schools, and vocational counselors. Also, a mail survey was conducted by randomly selecting 120 vocational high schools across the nation. Survey forms were sent out to a total of 840 teachers, graduates and parents of selected schools, and 688 surveys returned by the end of June were analyzed

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for the study.

Current conditions and issues learned from the research regarding the employment education of vocational high schools are as follows:

Compared to 1990, the number of graduates of vocational high schools in 2000 decreased for agricultural high schools, commercial high schools, and fisheries and marine high schools, while that of business high schools and industrial high schools is increasing. The number of vocational high school graduates who enter colleges is gradually increasing, while the number of those who find jobs is sharply decreasing from 1990. Compared to 1995, the overall number of vocational high school graduates who found a job decreased while those who went to college increased in 2000.

The trend is same for all types of vocational high schools - agricultural, commercial, industrial, fisheries and marine, and house-keeping high schools. In 2001, 57.7% of vocational high school graduates, or 94.8% of those who wanted to find a job, were employed. By school types, house-keeping high schools recorded the highest employment rate at 98%, followed by fisheries and marine, 96.2%, industrial, 96.4% and commercial vocational high schools at 94.5%.

Looking into employment education of vocational high schools in terms of building and operating a network, it was found that most schools have an internet home page or are creating one. However, not many schools are running a network for the employment education program.

On-the-job training program is another important issue. Although both teachers and students say that such training is required to help students adapt to work, obtain vocational information and pursue future career, only part of the students replied that they are adapting well to the OJT program, indicating that the program needs improvement.

Overall, the utilization of vocational information room is not active, average budget amount for employment education of vocational high schools is very low, and the budget to run the information room is not sufficient. Not many schools possess enough vocational data and information, while career information room and career counseling space are sufficient.

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Regarding employment education programs, vocational high schools do not have enough programs in terms of volume, lack comprehensive and lack easy-to-use data, and have programs or contents that are outdated.

Vocational high schools in general were found to have more counseling teachers than in the academic middle schools and high schools. However, these counseling teachers in vocational high schools considered vocational counseling only as a customary practice to which not much real support is given.

Based on the above conditions and issues of the vocational counseling programs of vocational high schools, improvement plans are developed for several areas: improving social conditions; building and running a network for vocational counseling; developing and running vocational programs; and developing counseling teachers.

To improve social conditions, efforts must first be made to: ①provide the benefit of alternative military service positions to vocational high school graduates by considering required military resources; ②develop a system to hire the graduates of vocational high schools in government offices and designated industry service; ③provide graduates of vocational high schools now working in various industries a chance to learn in colleges; ④develop plans to provide privileges to the holders of national technical qualifications; ⑤strengthen link between high school education and license programs; ⑥amend conventions or laws that are disadvantageous to vocational high school graduates; ⑦enhance social perception of vocational high school education; and ⑧increase financial support for vocational high schools.

To develop and upgrade the provision of vocational counseling programs it is necessary to: ①strengthen vocational counseling programs of vocational high schools, ②provide comprehensive data, ③use multimedia to develop and provide vocational counseling programs, ④provide meet-the-graduates programs and special guests lecture programs, ⑤reinforce vocational counseling hours, ⑥activate experience-oriented vocational education, ⑦develop and provide vocational education programs, ⑧reinforce operation of programs to recognize one's talent areas and aptitude, ⑨strengthen career counseling for students, ⑩provide continued vocational counseling and programs to graduates, ⑪build a specialized counseling system, and ⑫develop and implement

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programs to improve personal characters.

To build a network for vocational counseling it is necessary to: ①strengthen vocational counseling programs by leveraging school homepages, ②build graduates' database, ③build a vocational information database, and ④upgrade OJT programs. To secure and expand vocational counseling rooms, efforts must be made to: ①set up a vocational information center at each school, ②activate the operation of existing vocational information rooms, ③increase budget for the operation of vocational information rooms, ④collect more information to be provided to visitors to information rooms, and ⑤strengthen PR to encourage use of the vocational information room. In addition to these strategies there must be improvement made in the vocational information system and the strengthening of the function of national and regional vocational information centers.

Finally, the following efforts should be made regarding vocational counseling teachers: ①increasing the number of dedicated counseling teachers; ②strengthening systematic education for vocational counseling teachers; ③expanding and developing theory and practical knowledge for vocational counseling; ④changing perception of vocational high school teachers on vocational counseling; ⑤providing specialized vocational counseling; ⑥establishment of a system to manage vocational counseling and specialized counselors on the part of local educational offices; ⑦securing specialized counseling teachers; and ⑧relieving vocational counseling teachers of heavy duties and responsibilities.